



SOUTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

INSPIRE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL
WORLD BY EXHIBITING AND CARING FOR
ANIMALS, BY EXCELLING IN EDUCATION
AND RESEARCH AND BY PROVIDING AN
EXCEPTIONAL VISITOR EXPERIENCE



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Dear Aquarium Family,

Once every five years, the South Carolina Aquarium receives a report card from its accrediting authority, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

It is issued only after a rigorous review, which includes an extensive application process covering every aspect of our operation, a detailed multi-day inspection by visiting peers and a hearing by an Accreditation Commission comprising leaders from across our professional community.

As I write, I'm pleased to share that we passed with flying colors.

Our inspection report lauds our team's spirit and passion for our mission, our "top-notch" animal care, our robust education programming, our global-made-local approach to conservation, the excellent condition of our physical plant and our sound financial position. In short, we were acknowledged for leadership in our field.

I hope you share the pride experienced by our entire team, as you were a significant contributor to our success and our ability to deliver our mission.

Our accreditation follows a remarkable year which saw record attendance and the resumption of key programming. Schoolchildren once again animated our classrooms,

many of whom experienced their first glimpse of the harbor and ocean beyond. Saltmarsh planting resumed in the historic Maryville township, an African American legacy community in neighboring West Ashley. Work to fortify our facility against the threat of storm surge and sea level rise took shape under our building and in key locations.

Within these pages, you'll find additional evidence of the power of your support over the past year. Just as important, I hope you will appreciate the potential that exists within this Aquarium to continue our leadership and to serve our community even more effectively.

This year, we are embarking on a new master plan to enhance our ability to engage and inspire, and to ensure that guests from all backgrounds and with differing abilities will feel welcome and supported. We will be inviting voices from around the state to inform our thinking, and we will especially look forward to input from generous friends like you.

Please always feel free to contact me directly with your ideas, concerns and questions. When our next accreditation rolls around in another five years, we will be ready again thanks to your generous leadership.

Thank you for believing in the power of our institution to connect people with water, wildlife and wild places!

Sincerely,

Kevin Mills
President and CEO,
South Carolina Aquarium



Dear Friends,

It pleases me immensely to share the unprecedented success illustrated within the pages of this annual report. This success is worthy of celebration, as it is due in large part to the commitment of investors like you who never waver in your belief in our mission. The stories and moments captured in these pages are an undeniable indication that this institution is stronger, by all measures, than ever before and that the future is blindingly bright.

Truly a landmark year, 2022 was marked by exceptional attendance, unmatched since our earliest days, and the growth of our Angelfish program, which breaks down barriers to visitation for underserved communities. Our team of scientists and field workers were once again deployed to support partner agencies in restoring and safeguarding delicate ecosystems, and our Sea Turtle Care Center™ welcomed a steady stream of patients and a superb new director of veterinary care. Our education team operated at full capacity, serving 23 statewide counties and nearly 6,000 students through Dominion Energy School Programs. Our Education Outreach and virtual programs served an additional 6,000 students, and our innovative teen programming reached nearly 300 students.

The bold return of each of these programs cast into sharp relief the exciting urgency and the newfound feasibility surrounding the expansion of our Aquarium campus. As the year concluded, so too did the critical phase of fundraising for the new Boeing Learning Lab at the Charleston Maritime Center. On track to open in the summer of 2024, this facility will double the number of students enriched by our programming and facilitate sustained connectivity between our community and the waterfront.

The engine driving so much of this work is the philanthropic engagement of our family of investors, of which you are a part. 2022 represented a new high-water mark for fundraising success for the Aquarium, achieved largely through the exponential growth of our Watershed Society and our Conservation Steward giving societies. These extraordinary donor circles represent the most stalwart protectors of the Aquarium's mission, and I'm pleased to take this opportunity to thank these outstanding supporters.

The year ahead holds the promise of ever-bolder achievements in education, conservation and animal care within the Aquarium's profoundly unique facility and the world beyond our walls. We look forward to continuing this thrilling journey with you!

Sincerely,

Jonathan M. Zucker
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EDUCATION

AQUABOT

A new member of our Aquarium family arrived in the fall in the form of a telepresence robot. Thanks to an anonymous donor, Aflac and MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital, patients at select hospitals across the state may sign up for self-guided virtual tours of the Aquarium with the help of roving robot technology. Controlled directly from the patient's in-room tablet, the robot allows them to create their own path through the exhibits, offering a bridge to connect patients with water and wildlife. Patients have full control of the robot, letting curiosity guide them as they move forward to visit a sea turtle at its tank window, look up to see a shark swim by or zoom in to get a closer look at the iridescent scales on a fish. They are also able to speak and engage with the Aquarium educator teaching them throughout their adventure along with other students visiting the Aquarium, creating a fully immersive experience.

BOEING LEARNING LAB AT THE CHARLESTON MARITIME CENTER

Planning for the eagerly awaited Boeing Learning Lab, the Aquarium's most ambitious waterfront expansion since our founding, gained momentum through the completion of a bold and innovative design concept. The new facility, which will comprise more than 8,500 square feet of interdisciplinary education space, will delight students even before they walk through our doors. Designed by local architect John Ciccarelli, the Learning Lab will be a light-filled beacon, creating a seamless gateway between the classroom landscape and the bustling working harbor just beyond its walls. A nearly \$7 million project, the Learning Lab attracted just over \$6 million in contributions last year, including a \$2 million leadership investment from Boeing. The enthusiastic approval of the Learning Lab design was delivered by the Board of Architectural Review in October, and the project is slated to break ground in July 2023.

HIGH SCHOOL INTERN PROGRAM

Teen programs coordinator, Shelley Shrader, believes that encouraging teens to teach other teens benefits programming in every corner of the Aquarium. This approach gives our high school interns a chance to learn valuable leadership skills while giving them a safe platform to elevate their voices and provide unique perspectives. For the first time, the interns took the lead on developing and executing projects that are designed to positively impact youth, including Teen Science Cafés and Teen Job Shadow days, both within our walls and beyond.



CONSERVATION & FIELDWORK



JULIONFISH

Nearly 300 attendees — including 12 divers — joined us for the inaugural JuLionfish Derby + Festival. Divers participated in a month-long derby and culled 137 invasive lionfish just off our coast, making an impact in protecting native species and the biodiversity of our ocean. Since one lionfish consumes approximately 5,000 prey (primarily small fishes) annually, this equated to a total of 685,000 native species that may now continue to reproduce and populate our waters thanks to diver efforts. The culmination was a celebratory festival held at the Aquarium, where attendees were able to taste lionfish and small bites from local restaurant partners, participate in a silent auction, watch a lionfish filleting demonstration and more. Funds raised benefited Reef Research, a South Carolina Aquarium program focused on offshore research and fieldwork for scientific discovery and sustaining a balanced ocean.

SARA MCDONALD

Dr. Sara McDonald joined the South Carolina Aquarium team in January, taking on the role of director of conservation and adding creativity and fresh thinking to this critical area of our mission. Sara has had extensive career experience in marine mammal research and sustainable seafood, bringing a wide breadth of knowledge and understanding to the Aquarium to sustain and expand our conservation impact. Inspired by the capacity of the Aquarium to build authentic relationships with the community, and drive tangible outcomes in conservation and revitalization projects, Sara has spent the year mentoring her colleagues and learning from the community. She has invested time in advancing our work in mitigating the impacts of plastic pollution, engaging with communities surrounding resilience efforts and relaunching the Ask Before You Order pledge in preparation for the Good Catch program relaunch.

SAM WATERSTON AWARDEE

Lifelong environmental advocate and internationally acclaimed actor Sam Waterston was honored with the Environmental Stewardship Award at our 2022 Conservation Gala. Waterston graciously accepted the award with the wit and humor for which he is celebrated, communicating the ever-accelerating urgency around preserving ocean health. In his role as chair of the board of directors for Oceana, the largest international advocacy organization focused solely on ocean conservation, Waterston has used his voice to advocate for policy action around the scourges of plastic pollution and climate change on a global scale.

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

Accessibility is an important priority of the South Carolina Aquarium. The Aquarium expanded our library pass program to include Dorchester and Berkeley counties. The goal of this program is to minimize barriers and maximize opportunities for our community to experience the Aquarium by encouraging library members to check out a one-week visitor pass, just as they would a book. Bilingual bookmarks distributed in each of the served counties spread awareness for both the library pass program and our Angelfish Family membership, designed for families who participate in assistance programs including SNAP/EBT, WIC and the SC Voucher Program. Placing further priority on inclusivity, we now offer several resources in Spanish, including our new member materials, that welcome many new families into our doors.

RETURN OF PUBLIC SEA TURTLE RELEASES

One of the most celebratory moments from this past year was the return of public sea turtle releases. For the first time in nearly three years, the community united to release six sea turtles: Kemp's ridleys, Elsa, Olaf and Gale, and loggerheads, Citrine, Moonstone and Sunstone. While the sun rose over the dunes and into a clear, blue sky, beachgoers of all ages gathered to support the journey home of these endangered species. Many factors are considered in determining where, when and how we release sea turtles; the Aquarium, Charleston County Parks and Recreation and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources were delighted that these six patients' stories aligned so we could continue inspiring lifelong protectors of sea turtles.

EDUCATION OUTREACH

Education Outreach, driven by Mercedes-Benz Vans, hit multiple powerful milestones, including a ten-year high of 13,768 participants, a three-year high of 302 programs offered and two new South Carolina counties visited. And the numbers don't stop there — the Education Outreach vehicle, the Honda Element, crossed the 200,000-mile mark! Throughout the state, crowds of curious students of all ages were inspired by our educators and wowed by ambassador animals. Upstate libraries in particular had strong showings for our educators, with one library hosting more than 400 attendees. Lastly, the program crossed state lines to offer programs at libraries in Georgia for the first time.



ANIMAL CARE

AMBASSADOR ANIMAL PROGRAM

Inspired by the ambassador animals she cares for weekly, Aquarium volunteer Maureen Glass, along with her husband Don, invested in the Animal Care Sustainers Fund to fund our Ambassador Animal program. This generous gift supports expert veterinary care, healthy habitats and specialized enrichment for the animals that countless children and adults experienced — and even touched — on the Aquarium floor. Animal ambassadors were also featured in our award-winning education programs, including Dominion Energy School Programs, Education Outreach and the High School Intern Program. Finally, on the digital front, these animals captivated thousands of viewers through virtual events and virtual visits.



SPOTLIGHT ON UNDERREPRESENTED ANIMALS

Everyone loves the furry otters sporting their adorably large noses and pointed whiskers; people fawn over the beloved sea turtles with their harrowing stories of resiliency and strength; and visitors “ooh and ah” in the presence of the ever-majestic bald eagle... but last year proved that an animal doesn't have to be cute, courtly or charismatic (at least not in the traditional sense) to win hearts! From snakes to horseshoe crabs to salamanders, our social media channels connected viewers to animals of all shapes, sizes and scales, inspiring love of creatures that are underrepresented and often misunderstood. After all, biodiversity comprises the natural world around us. Snakes, horseshoe crabs and salamanders, and all of their fellow underrepresented animals, play vital roles in the balance of our planet's ecosystems.

INNOVATIVE CARE FOR MERCURY THE GREEN SEA TURTLE

Our veterinary team consistently finds new ways to administer compassionate, thoughtful animal care with imagination and innovation, and Mercury's story was one for the books. Mercury arrived to the Sea Turtle Care Center™ with masses caused by Fibropapillomatosis (FP), a strain of herpes virus specific to sea turtles. This virus is highly contagious and causes cauliflower-like tumor growths all over the soft tissue of a sea turtle's body. Since FP tumors can grow large enough to impact the ability of the turtle to swim and see, surgical removal is critical. Thankfully, with the help of Dr. Terry Norton from Georgia Sea Turtle Center and his CO₂ laser, we were able to remove all of Mercury's tumors with very minimal bleeding. Mercury healed beautifully and was released into the tranquil waters of Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in August of 2022.



THANK YOU

The work of the South Carolina Aquarium would be simply impossible without the passionate engagement of our donor family. Our community of supporters is truly unlike any other. You connect with our mission through our people, and through the experiences we share — within our walls and beyond.

You are Sea Turtle Guardians, you are animal care sustainers, you are citizen scientists and you are believers in a bright future for our planet.

We thank you for boldly engaging with the ambitious vision of the South Carolina Aquarium to lead the way in connecting people with water, wildlife and wild places. Your belief in us carries us forward and keeps us strong, and we are indescribably grateful for the many forms of investment you make in this important institution.

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NetServ Applications Inc
The Netter Foundation
Melissa Newhall and George Yu
Susan Nigro
Julie Nocida
Ashley O'Brien
Patty and Harry Olsen
Spencer and Caitlin Ong
Brenda and James Orcutt, M.D. *
Anne and Robert Ostrom
Rebecca Parsons
Jill and Matthew Patrick, D.V.M.
Annette and William Patterson
Patricia and Zeke Petryszyn
Alyssa and Robert Phillips
Photogenic Inc.

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Kathryn and Russell Pickett *
Pledgeling Foundation
Marla Rea
Jennifer Reid
Caroline Richardson
Carolyn and Richard Riley
Bené and Charles Rittenberg *
Rivelon Elementary School
The Robinson Charitable Trust
Merrill Robling *
Amber Roos
Ginny and Jeff Runge
David Russell and Patricia Long *
Howard Schapiro and Jan Carroll
Robert Schofield
Lisa and Michael Schools *
Joann and Mitchell Sherman
Karen Sherwood *
Luke Siefker
The Small and Greif Families *
Ann and Michael Snipes
Monte and Holly Stenger
Ben and Virginia Street
Jessica and James Suddeth, III
Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
Team Pritchards
Alyssa Thatcher
Kate Byrd
Jim and Cynthia Thompson
Linda and John Tompkins
Emily and Jeremy Touloukian
Pauline Traverse-Gunn
Michael and Angie Tschantz
Barbara and Neil Ulrich
David Ulrich
Sally and Thorne Vail
Martin and Mary Vogt
Carly and Tom Westerman
Barry Whalen *
Lynn and S. Marsh Willis, Jr., M.D. *
The Windjammer
Libby and John Winthrop *
Jean and James Wolitarsky
Laura and Ed Woodcock
Elizabeth R. Zahrn
Carole and Marc Zaloumis
Barbara and Lenny Zucker

VOLUNTEERS
Jennifer Addison
Amanda Alig
Maycie Allers
Tamara Alquza
Emily Alvarez

Heidi Anderson
Bright Ariail
Al Bagdonas
Meaghan Bailey
Beth Baldwin
Maggie Ball
Karen Bartlett
James Barton-Souza
Sean Berube
Noah Blake
Walt Boquist
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Maddie Boylan
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Hayden Braun
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Mike Brown
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Karl Bunch
Bryce Bunting
Katielyn Bunting
Benjamin Burdette
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Florence Canaday
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Claire Carlson
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Ronald Cavey
Samuel Chase
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Diane Chronis
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Ken Couls
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Elodie Cutler
Jessica Cutler
Lyndsey Davis
Dan Delanty

Daniel Delanty
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Robert Ferguson
Raeven Flake
Jake Forsyth
Charles Fosler
Alyssa Foster
Bridget Fountain
Charlie Fox
Lori Fox
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Amy Funderburk
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Zack German
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Lynne Gettelfinger *
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Megan Glass
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Sue Googer
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Kaitlin Gregoire
Laura Gregoire
Sam Griffin
John-Henry Gross
Theo Hair
Sophia Hallam
Bob Harris
Joyce Harrison
Nancy Heinz
Mike Henry
John Hirsch
Kelly Holdsworth

Cam Hollander
Linda Hollander
Emily Hoops
Jeff Hooven
Nitika Hopkins
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Yale Huett
Brent Humphrey *
Kelley Hwang
Dory Ingram
Taylor Jackwood
Kathy Jahn
Tyler Jernigan
Katherine Jetton
Michaela Jones
Robert Juzups
Aaron Kelley
Andrea Kelly
Spencer Kelly
Sue Kershaw
Claire Kirby
Parker Kirkwood
Betsy Knight
Alexander Koontz
Morgan Korecki
Derek Korte
Laura Kozman
Kassidy Lange
Maddie Langer
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Nathan McKeta
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Sarah Norris
Daniella Noy
Isabelle Noy
Ellen Oblow
Mary Ohl
Porter Ohl
Vanessa Oltmann
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Kathy O'Toole
Kayli Paterson
Rick Peppler
Ashley Peralta
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Brianna Petriella
Maci Petrolle
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Mary Kate Powell
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Kenny Puckett
Stephanie Pyle
Kelly Quinlan
Rick Quintero
Sarah Rabon
Liam Radeke
Madeline Revkin
Melissa Rhoad
Jay Bird Rispoli
Judy Roberts
Kendra Rodell
Suzi Rodgers
Susan Rohr
Chris Rosendall
Tolli Rosol
Jared Ross
Billy Rutherford
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Kathryn Sanyal
Sydney Satterwhite
Gail Schiffer

Spike Schillo
Kiera Schneider
Timothy Schuller
Stan Schwab
Virginia Scully
Ellie Setser *
Corey Shea
Paul Siegel
Kate Silvia
Matthew Silvia
Sadie Skeels
Mike Smith
Mara Southard
Ella Spradlin
Marlene Stagnaro
Louis Steinke
Dick Stifel
Emmie Strickland
Kevin Talatham
Grace Taylor
Julie Tecklenburg
Benjamin Thépaut
Lauren Thomas
Ricky Thomas
Miles Thompson
Adam Tiberian
Emma Tiberian
Anna Todd
Sierra Tompkins
Jim Trusso
Jake Tucker
Rosaria Tumminello
Pam Utzig
Valerie Van Tine
Milena Vauclair
Diana Vincent
Ted Wackler
Levi Wagner
Robin Wagner
Savannah Wall
Jianna Wankel
Tim Warrick
George Washington
Eric Wehmeyer
Mark Weninger
Kimberly Wheat
Mikael Wiel
David Wilkins
Daniel Winters
Maddie Workman
Bailey Wright
Maria Wright
Hal Wynne

* Charter Member

NAUTILUS SOCIETY



CHARITABLE GIFT
PLANNING IS A
MEANINGFUL WAY
TO CREATE A LEGACY
OF GENEROSITY AND
PHILANTHROPY FOR
FUTURE GENERATIONS.
WITH THOUGHTFUL
PREPARATION, YOU
CAN CONTINUE TO MAKE
A DEEP IMPACT ON THE
SOUTH CAROLINA
AQUARIUM AND OUR
MISSION FOR YEARS
TO COME.

DON HIGGINS

Don Higgins' lifelong passion for marine life was sparked in the 1970s while living and scuba diving in Singapore. Don has served as a critical and passionate member of the Aquarium's board of directors for more than 18 years, 17 of which he has served as treasurer. Our staff and mission made an indelible impact on him, and in 2022, he and his wife, Peg, decided to join the Nautilus Society by making a planned gift to the Aquarium. Don and Peg feel that the South Carolina Aquarium team has become a part of their personal family, and they want to help ensure that the future of the organization is sustainable and bright.

We are thankful to these individuals who have included us in their estate plans:

- Jim* and Esther Ferguson
- Dennis and Lynne Gettelfinger
- Karen and Jack Higgins
- Peg and Don Higgins
- Drs. Kenneth Kwochka and Theresa Brim
- Susan Rohr and Athalie Rohr
- Karen and Richard* Sherwood
- Tom Tate and Lori Fox

* Deceased

SUPPORTS AND REVENUE

Admissions	\$ 9,070,989
Contributions	\$ 14,695,050
Memberships	\$ 1,485,260
Concessions	\$ 946,538
Other Income	\$ (213,916)
Programs and Events	
Special Events	\$ 1,217,203
Fundraising Events	\$ 220,305
Program Revenues	\$ 99,909
Supplemental	\$ 202,316

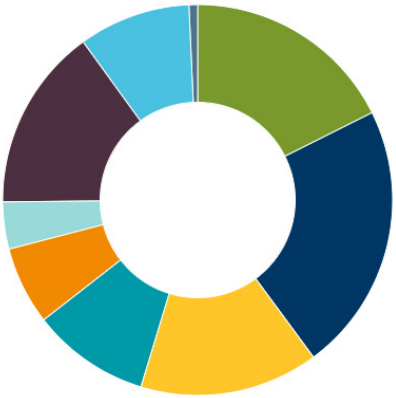
Total Revenue \$ 27,723,654

EXPENSES

Program Services	
Facilities	\$ 2,499,582
Guest Programs	\$ 3,154,969
Animal Care	\$ 2,100,707
Education	\$ 1,387,344
Conservation	\$ 916,551
Memberships	\$ 553,066

Supporting Services	
Management and General	\$ 2,149,610
Annual Campaign and Fundraising	\$ 1,315,940
Membership Development	\$ 101,591

Total Expenses \$ 14,179,360



FINANCIALS

BEYOND THE HORIZON

The year ahead holds the promise of new beginnings and the realization of many of the Landmark initiatives that gained momentum in the year just past. The Learning Lab is on pace to open its doors in Fall 2024, welcoming students of all ages for immersive experiences in the 2024–2025 school season. In subsequent seasons, the education team will introduce an after school program, as well as a summer programming series, both designed to accommodate students from underserved communities. Our teen programming will continue to expand within the new facility, and a broadcast center for our virtual programs will be installed to enable our education team to continue to serve students across the globe.

As the Aquarium's vision for a connected east peninsula waterfront evolves and Charleston's new cultural corridor comes to life, the future of Liberty Square — the green space that greets guests within Aquarium Wharf — will evolve as a space for play, free programming and amenities, as well as bring vitality and consistent animation to our neighborhood. In 2023, the Aquarium will connect with local communities to chart a program path for Liberty Square, ensuring that the spirit and experiences within the space serve the needs of guests.

The Aquarium team will also embark on a new master planning initiative, designed to produce a fresh, long-range plan for the future of our central physical plant. As our existing first-floor classrooms transition to usable exhibit and experiential space, we will creatively reimagine the immediate guest experience that greets our nearly 500,000 annual visitors. We will even evaluate the expansion of our facility, which was initially conceived with an eye toward expanding our footprint on the north side of our building, potentially adding animal habitats and new exhibits and experiences. The master planning exercise will challenge our team to creatively reimagine how best to care for our animals, our guests and our team, and to imagine the future of engagement within our walls.





100 AQUARIUM WHARF
CHARLESTON, SC 29401

